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## OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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### **Montana Statewide Norm-Referenced Testing Program Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS), Phase 1 The Journey to March 2001**

In March of 2001, Montana students participated in the state's first state-level assessment. Students in grades four, eight, and eleven took standardized norm-referenced tests in reading, math, language arts (communication arts), science, and social studies.

One state-level test provides an opportunity for a profile of student achievement across the state of Montana with consistency in sorting information, assessment aligned to selected state standards, test administration, and participation by all students. The journey to this event was preceded by legislation and Board of Public Education rules.

#### **Legislation**

- Directs the Board of Education to "adopt rules for student assessment in the public schools."<sup>1</sup>
- Directs the superintendent of public instruction to report school district assessment data "for a test required by the board of public education."<sup>2</sup>
- The 1999 legislature appropriated funds for a statewide norm-referenced test spring, 2001.<sup>3</sup>

#### **The Board of Education**

Recognizes that the purpose of assessment is "to serve learning"<sup>4</sup> and directs the following for:

##### State-level assessment

- "All accredited schools shall annually administer a single system of state-level assessments approved by the board."<sup>5</sup>
- Students in grades four, eight and eleven will be tested in reading, communication arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.<sup>6</sup>
- "All students shall participate in the state-level assessments. Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency (LEP) shall participate using the approved assessments, unless it is determined that a student's progress toward the content standards cannot be adequately measured with the approved assessments even when provided accommodations."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M.C.A. § 20-2-121 (12)

<sup>2</sup> M.C.A. §20-3-106 (29)

<sup>3</sup> 1999 Mont Laws 2606

<sup>4</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101

<sup>5</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101 (3)

<sup>6</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101 (3)(a)

<sup>7</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101 (7)

Release of state-level assessment data

- “The office of public instruction shall provide a report of the results to the board, the legislature, and the public.”<sup>8</sup>
- The superintendent of public instruction may make available the student assessment data in compliance with confidentiality requirements of federal and state law.<sup>9</sup>

The Montana Board of Education approved the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Form A for grades four and eight and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development Form A for grade eleven. The tests are part of a large-scale assessment plan and are standardized and norm referenced.

For a full description and explanation of the test, please refer to the “Interpretive Guide: 2001” found at <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/assessment/2001interpguide.pdf>

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<sup>8</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101 (5)

<sup>9</sup> A.R.M. §10.56.101 (6)